



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Lower Your Stroke Risk

World Stroke Day — October 29, 2015

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Stroke is among the leading causes of death and disability worldwide. In the U.S., strokes are more common among women.

Dr. Erika Odom is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss ways to decrease your chances of having a stroke. Welcome to the show, Erika.

[Dr. Odom] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erika, how many people die from a stroke each year?

[Dr. Odom] Nearly 130,000 Americans die from stroke each year. That's, on average, one death from stroke every four minutes. This is important because in many cases, stroke is preventable by modifying lifestyle behaviors or managing medical conditions.

[Dr. Gaynes] Why are women more likely to have a stroke?

[Dr. Odom] In general, women tend to live longer than men and stroke rates greatly increase as we age. In addition, women have unique risk factors that might lead to stroke, including taking birth control pills, pregnancy, and menopause.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the symptoms of a stroke?

[Dr. Odom] A person suffering stroke may experience sudden numbness of their face, arm or leg. This typically occurs on one side of the body. They may also have sudden changes in their communication, like difficulty speaking or understanding what other people are saying. Some people may also experience sudden, very severe headache, dizziness, or loss of balance. An acronym to help people remember the signs and symptoms of stroke is FAST or F-A-S-T. The F stands for face. Ask the person to smile and look to see if they're having signs of facial drooping. The A stands for arms. Have the person raise both their arms and look to see if they're able to move those arms together or if one arm drifts downward. The S stands for speech. Here you can ask the person to repeat a phrase and see if their speech is slurred or sounds strange. Lastly, the T stands for time. If you see any of these symptoms, it's important to call 911 right away so that you can get them to life-saving treatment as soon as possible. The chances of survival and recovery are higher if treatment is provided right away.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some risk factors for having a stroke?

[Dr. Odom] High blood pressure is the most common risk factor for stroke. Other risk factors include diabetes, high blood cholesterol, smoking, and an irregular heart beat, also known as atrial fibrillation.

There are also some risk factors that can't be changed, such as older age, being a woman, or if you have a family history of stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erika, what can we do to decrease our chances of having a stroke?

[Dr. Odom] To prevent a stroke, we all need to get started on a healthy lifestyle as early as possible. Eat a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, maintain a healthy weight, quit smoking, and get plenty of exercise on a regular basis, such as 30 minutes of brisk walking. You should also work with your health care provider to make sure your blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes are under control.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about stroke prevention?

[Dr. Odom] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Erika. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Erika Odom about ways to decrease the chances of having a stroke.

Remember, if you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of a stroke, get help right away. Immediate treatment can help prevent disabilities and save lives.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.